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Perspectives

Good news bears repeating.

Last month's *Leading Object* carried a front-page story head-lined "CASNR Leads All UNL Colleges in Fall Semester Enrollment Gain."

For the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR), which saw enrollments decline for eight straight years prior to this one, that is wonderful news.

CASNR's gain of 42 more students than were enrolled in the college last year leads all other University of Nebraska–Lincoln colleges in undergraduate enrollment numbers.

The College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) is third at UNL, with an increase of 25 more undergraduates than were enrolled last year.

At Curtis, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) reports 48 more students enrolled this fall than were enrolled last year, and leads all of NU in percentage increase.

Our enrollments are heading up, and up is a very good direction. It is a direction we celebrate this year, and look forward to celebrating next year, when reports of increased undergraduate enrollments really need to occur again.

We have so much to offer students who study with us. We provide a tremendous education in a supportive environment. That education springboards our alumni to a wide variety of worthwhile and rewarding careers. Our faculty and staff show real dedication to our students' success. CASNR has the second highest retention rate at UNL. Our students make us proud as they work and grow in their fields and in their lives, and over 70 percent of our graduates surveyed stay in Nebraska after graduation.

We hear the phrase "the power of red" on campus these days, and it has meaning far beyond the athletic field.

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John C. Owens
NU Vice President and
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

The Leading Object

*The Morrill Act of 1862
established a Land Grant University
in each state where
The Leading Object
would be instruction
in agriculture and related fields.*

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IANR

October 2005

Cunningham Named ARD Dean and Director

Gary L. Cunningham, a USDA research administrator, has been named Dean and Director of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Agricultural Research Division.

Cunningham was chosen from among three finalists by John Owens, University of Nebraska Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"Dr. Cunningham will be instrumental in assisting IANR faculty and staff as they advance the research agenda of the Institute during a time of increased competition for funding at all levels and sources," Owens said. "We are fortunate to have attracted one of the most talented and successful research administrators to the university."

Owens said Cunningham has an important mix of experience at the USDA and at land-grant universities. At USDA, Cunningham "plays a key role in the federal agency most closely associated with this nation's land-grant universities and, with a budget of \$1.2 billion, it is the largest such unit in the world."

Cunningham has served as Associate Administrator of USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service for four years. Pending approval by the Board of Regents, he will assume his new position December 15.

In his four years at USDA, Cunningham has led initiatives such as the agency's work on food and agriculture defense. Prior to his work at USDA, he served in various positions at New Mexico State University, including Vice President for Research, Director of the New Mexico

Agriculture Experiment Station, Department of Biology Head, and Professor of Plant Ecology.

Cunningham said he is excited to return to a land-grant university.

"The Agricultural Research Division is not only the largest, but also the most diverse and complex research unit at the university," he said. "Its unique combination of agricultural, natural resource, and social scientists provides great possibilities for cooperation across the campus, the state, and the region to address the knowledge needs that will contribute to the economic, social, and personal well-being of all Nebraskans."

Cunningham's research at NMSU focused on plant ecology, photosynthesis, and water issues. He has earned federal grants from agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Cunningham received his bachelor's of science degree in biology and his master's of science degree in botany from the University of Arizona. His doctorate in botany is from the University of California, Los Angeles.

"I look forward to working with the bright, dedicated, and committed faculty, staff, students, and clientele who are already serving Nebraska so well," Cunningham said.



Cunningham

Our faculty and staff are, indeed, the power of red, carrying on the research, teaching, and extension education missions of this great land-grant university.

Our students and alumni are the power of red, learning and growing in their lives and careers, contributing to their fields and communities, building the future. The more students we enroll, retain, and graduate, the better the power of red is, and the more powerful it becomes.

We all need to take a moment to enjoy this year's enrollment increases, and to applaud each and every person whose hard work increased our student numbers. Then we need to get right back to work with added determination to raise these numbers even more next year.

Enrollment is a challenge throughout UNL. While first-time freshman enrollments are up throughout UNL, overall enrollment at UNL dropped 117 students this fall, compared to fall 2004.

As you all know, enrollments that came in below projections this year and last year mean tuition revenue shortfalls. These tuition revenue shortfalls are leading to temporary and permanent budget cuts on campus this year, with permanent cuts to be in place not later than July 1, 2006. We are working right now in the Institute to put together our proposal of what IANR's permanent cuts will be. That proposal is due to the Chancellor in December.

We expect to handle this year's temporary cuts in the Institute largely through salary savings on open positions, which

means holding jobs open longer than any of us would like. While that is frustrating for us all, it allows us to avoid further cuts in other areas.

The Chancellor's recent e-mail to us about the huge increase in utility costs and the measures UNL is taking to try to keep the increase as manageable as possible reminds us our university faces other funding challenges we also must work to meet.

In the case of utility costs, UNL's business office projects a \$3.6 million shortfall in the Lincoln campus's utility budget. Between now and June 30, UNL hopes to handle \$1.0 million of that with energy-saving techniques. The challenge is great, however, and not all buildings can be shut down in off hours. Additional operational cost savings would be most helpful if we are to avoid even more trauma to our budgets, and I welcome your suggestions.

We can't control the cost of utilities, but we can impact usage, and each of us has a real opportunity to help with recruitment. When it comes to adding students to our classes, the only way to go is up.



Test Finds Soy Flour

A commercialized test that detects traces of soy flour has been developed by UNL food scientists.

The test, available through Neogen Corp. of Lansing, Michigan, will help better protect consumers with soy allergies, said Sue Hefle, Food Toxicologist and Co-Director of the university's Food Allergy Research and Resource Program.

Soy is one of eight common foods responsible for about 90 percent of food allergic reactions, Hefle said. Hefle's UNL team previously had devised tests to detect other allergenic foods, such as peanuts, milk, eggs, and almonds.

The tests detect traces of an allergenic food on manufacturing equipment or in food processed on shared equipment.

Study to Outline IANR's Economic Impact on Nebraska

Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources administrators believe IANR has a high economic value to the state. Now they plan to prove it.

IANR has contracted with a nonprofit research and development organization to conduct a study that will outline IANR's economic impact on Nebraska.

Battelle International, based in Columbus, Ohio, began the study this fall with results expected next spring, said Alan Moeller, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Finance and Personnel.

"I think in the climate we're currently in, with tight budgets and public accountability for state and federal tax dollars expenditures, it's important to be able to communicate the significant positive impact our programs are having in Nebraska and beyond," Moeller said.

Battelle will provide an assessment of IANR's overall economic impact on the state and illustrate specific ways the Institute benefits Nebraska and communities. Economic impact will be measured in terms of monetary and employment benefits generated by IANR's operations, Moeller said.

Battelle will look at all aspects of the institute – teaching, research, and extension education, as well as the IANR-funded research and extension components in the College of Education and Human Sciences.

The study was initiated by University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Dean Elbert Dickey, who learned last spring that Battelle did a study on the economic impact of extension and research programs in Ohio. UNL Extension administrators went to Ohio to visit with Battelle officials and the extension director of Ohio State University. The Ohio report showed the economic impact of extension programs was several times more than the investment.

"We're hoping this will help us identify the contributions we're making to the state, and we're hoping we will be able to use it as we work with decision makers to show that investing in IANR provides a good return on their investment," Moeller said.

– Lori McGinnis

Need to meet with the

Vice President/Vice Chancellor?
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.*

NU Vice President for
Agriculture and Natural Resources
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

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The Leading Object is published monthly for all IANR staff members by Communications & Information Technology. Questions or story ideas may be directed to the editor at 106 ACB, 0918; via e-mail (lmcginnis2@unl.edu) or via fax (402-472-0025).

UNL Helped Douglas Broaden Career Perspective

Jihad Douglas had planned to enter academia when he enrolled at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to earn his Ph.D. in animal science.

However, his experience at UNL swayed him in a different direction, and now he is president of the largest turkey primary breeding operation in the United States.

"I thought I was going into academics, but by my third year (of his Ph.D. studies) I realized there were other options. That is where I started diversifying," he said.

Douglas was pursuing his doctorate in poultry nutrition when faculty members helped him to think about pursuing poultry nutrition from a business standpoint. He credits former Animal Science Professor Tom Sullivan for helping broaden his perspective.

Douglas, a native of Lebanon, came to Nebraska to study in 1985 after earning his undergraduate degree in agriculture from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. After earning his Ph.D. in 1989, he worked until 1993 in the department as a research associate. At the same time, he took some business courses, which helped him complete his MBA in Canada in 1996.



Douglas

In Canada he worked as a nutritionist for Hybrid Turkey beginning in 1994. He was named technical services manager in 1996 and general manager in 2002. He moved to Sonoma, California, in 2004 to become President of Nicholas Turkey Breeding Farms.

As President of Nicholas, the nation's largest primary turkey breeding farm in the nation, Douglas handles everything from product development to financial operations to marketing. The company, which has 70 percent of the market share in the United States, currently is in the process of moving to Lewisburg, West Virginia.

The company sells turkey hatching eggs to a variety of companies worldwide that in turn hatch the eggs, then breed and process the birds.

Douglas attributes his UNL classes for helping him develop a solid foundation as a commercial businessman.

He also said the cultural diversity he found while in Animal Science helped him to see the world from different perspectives. Not only did he relate to students from around Nebraska, but also from several countries.

"It was an amazing place to learn, grow and mature," he said. "The people I worked with in Animal Science were tremendous. They supported me in any way they could."

—Lori McGinnis

BIT Mobile to Provide Technology Training

A traveling technology classroom is scheduled to navigate its way across rural Nebraska starting in January.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension's 28-by-9-foot trailer will be outfitted with 14 laptop computers and other equipment that will be used to teach information technology classes. It is called the BIT Mobile, BIT standing for business information technology.

"The intent is to go to the people with technology training, such as eAgriculture, eCommerce, eGovernment and eKnowledge," said Connie Hancock, Extension Educator based in Sidney who is leading the effort.

"We'll pull it behind a university pickup and go into remote sites that may or may not have an Internet connection," Hancock said. For those areas without an Internet site, a satellite hookup will be used.

BIT Mobile students will be business

people, government officials, agricultural producers, and anyone else who wants to learn about computers and technology, she said.

Business people taking eBusiness training will learn how to develop or upgrade their Web sites and do business on the Internet. County government officials will learn how to use the Internet in day-to-day business. Producers will learn to use computer technologies in their operations. The general public will learn about basic Microsoft Windows applications, e-mail, navigating Web sites, and other topics.

In addition, classes will be available on spreadsheets, global information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS), and digital photography.

"It's amazing that computers have been around for a long time but some people don't know how to utilize the full functions of their unit," Hancock said.

Scheduling for BIT Mobile classes will be done this fall with actual classes starting in January. The sessions will last 12 hours spread over four weeks.

Extension is providing \$75,000 for the BIT Mobile. Grant funding is being sought for operating expenses,

Hancock said. The trailer, which will be equipped with heating, air conditioning, and interior and exterior lighting, is being built at Oregon State University, which has such a trailer in use, Hancock said.

"It's going to be great. There's a lot of people interested in it and we're very excited about it," she said.

The trailer will rotate between the four research and extension districts in Nebraska, said Chuck Hibberd, Director of the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff who is assisting in the project.

"From my personal perspective this is a tremendous resource for Extension to continue to educate Nebraskans on technology," Hibberd said. "We're in an age where technology is more than a keyboard. It's about developing Web sites and commerce on the Internet."

Surveys show that 50 percent of Nebraska agriculture producers already use the Internet and the interest is growing, Hibberd said.

"The demand for technology training is just skyrocketing," he said. "What we're teaching now is way beyond what we were teaching two years ago."

—Lori McGinnis



New Assessment System Will Evaluate Student Learning

An assessment system designed to help faculty evaluate student learning at the academic program level was unveiled this month to faculty in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Program Excellence through Assessment, Research, and Learning, or PEARL, is being piloted this fall in CASNR and in the College of Education and Human Sciences. If successful, it could be used by all University of Nebraska–Lincoln colleges, said CASNR Associate Dean Susan Fritz.

“We have excellent curriculum but PEARL will increase the conversations at the program level about increasing student learning,” she said. “It’s a pretty exciting program. The exciting thing about it is we’re all learning as part of this process.”

PEARL is modeled after an assessment system used at Colorado State University. Because of its success there, nine faculty members from the two UNL colleges have been meeting for several months to adapt it to UNL. It was introduced to CASNR

faculty on October 14.

Program faculty will post to a Web site outcomes, assessment strategies, and methods for measuring how well students are learning in specified academic programs. Currently-used assessment systems are not online. Eventually, assessment results and their programmatic impacts will be reported online as well.

“This has the opportunity for cultural change here,” Fritz said. “It’s a shift in thinking.”

Landscaping Workshops Attended by Over 300

Take a look at any public park or school grounds across Nebraska and you may find lush green grass with weedy, unkempt landscaping beds. Or maybe the trees are in need of pruning.

The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension, and the Nebraska Forest Service held a series of hands-on workshops to help people strike a better balance between caring for turf, trees, and other landscaping.

“Over the years we’ve seen enough trouble and tribulation in the landscapes that we thought it was time to educate those people who care for our parks, schools, and public places,” said Justin Evertson, assistant director of the arboretum.

Five workshops were held this fall in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Hastings, Norfolk, and the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead. More than 300 people attended.

The workshops taught grounds keepers,

park employees, arborists, turfcare professionals, golf course managers, acreage owners, and the general public about weed control, tree care and pruning, balancing tree and turf strategies, mulching tips, and other landscaping topics.

Evertson said he has seen public grounds where caretakers make sure the grass is green but ignore the trees and other landscaping plants. That usually is because those caretakers lack training in landscape care.

“We need to get a better handle on what’s important in caring for our community landscapes,” he said.

Funding for the workshops was partially provided by the National Tree Trust, a private nonprofit organization that promotes public awareness of trees and their benefits. Speakers included Evertson and Bob Henrikson from the arboretum, Roch Gaussoin, Extension Turfgrass Specialist, and representatives from the forest service.

Rekart receives Regents November KUDO Award

Nancy Rekart, Office Supervisor for the Department of Agricultural Economics, has been selected to receive the University of Nebraska Board of Regents November KUDO award.



Rekart

Written letters of support compliment Rekart for her teamwork attitude. One letter writer said “she has provided the glue for the department and the institutional memory for a succession of department heads.” Another said Rekart has an “ability to get it all done and with such apparent ease.” Another said she “completes projects in a timely manner and goes above and beyond what her position requires of her.”

Rekart will receive the award at the November 11 Regents meeting.

Autotown Web site Helps Teens Learn to Buy a Car

Teenagers wanting to buy a car have a new Web site to go to that will teach them the process.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension has developed the site, which helps teens know how to buy and finance a car and maintain it, said Leanne Manning, an Extension Educator based in Wilber.

“We thought this would be a fun way to learn about financing since buying a car is an interest to teenagers,” Manning said.

The need to learn exists, Manning said. She pointed to a nationwide survey in 2004 for the Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy that showed 65.5 percent of the 4,000 high school students who took its exam failed it.

The site, <http://autotown.unl.edu>, features a diagram with buildings depicting businesses a teen would visit when buying a car, including a dealership, a bank, an insurance company, and an auto repair

business. Quizzes help teens determine financing and test their knowledge about car-buying basics.

Extension has distributed posters to high schools throughout the state to let teens know about the new site, Manning said. The site, which went online in early September, contains an evaluation, and one teen already estimated it will save him \$3,000, Manning said.